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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this presentation is to report on a study undertaken by the author to asses teachers' social perceptions of dialectal differences among junior high school males. Male and female teachers judged the academic ability and school behavior of three black and three white male student speakers representing upper-middle-class, middle-class, and lower-class backgrounds, based on their spoken language. Teachers heard tape-recordings of these junior high school students reading the same brief passage. Black and white teachers, 13 of each, were selected by a random procedure from a junior high school in the Dade County, Florida, Public School System. This particular school was selected because of the black and white ratio (21 percent black, 79 percent white) of faculty desegregation, and the diversity in the teachers' birthplaces, educational backgrounds, and geographical locations of their teaching experiences. The findings indicate that white speakers were perceived with a significantly higher degree of favorableness by all teachers. Black teacher judgments were found to be significantly more favorable than those of white teachers. There were no significant differences found in the degree of favorableness with which upper-middle, middle, or lower-class speakers were perceived by all teachers.
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TEACHER ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH RACE AND SOCIAL CLASS

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TEACHER ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH RACE AND SOCIAL CLASS

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Background

The purpose of this presentation is to report on a study undertaken by the author to assess teachers' social perceptions of dialectal differences among junior high school males.

Within the past decade--especially during the increase in the desegregation of public school systems--there has been much discussion in education (as well as in anthropology, sociology, and linguistics) regarding success and failure in school performance according to social class and ethnicity as being largely the result of conflicts between the language and culture of the school and the language and culture of the child, and of the imposition of middle-class teachers' values on lower-class students leading somehow to low expectations of student performance (Aarons, Gordon, and Stewart, 1969).

Teacher attitudes, expectations, and consequent judgments of pupil performance and ability have been posited to affect their behavior towards the learning process and teacher-learner relationships (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968).

Language differences associated with race and social class may trigger disparate behaviors towards students, and these disparate behaviors may be perceived by students as negative, thereby possibly affecting student motivation and performance.

There are many variables determining teacher evaluations of students. Dialectal differences are not generally judged or evaluated free of attitudes towards persons of various ethnic and social backgrounds. Labov (1966), therefore, stated that an assessment instrument of teacher attitudes as based on phonological variations should be of such design as to reflect the influence of such variables as the speaker's racial and social background, ability, personality, and associated variables; and should be subject to quantitative measurement.

Problem and Purpose

There is a difficulty in conceptualizing the relationships between language variations and the psychological and sociological factors that may be involved in the judgments of others where based predominantly on linguistic cues.

Teachers seem to lack awareness and a frame of reference for their subjective evaluations and attitudes about students, as based on the relationship between language differences and teacher judgments, where their favorable or unfavorable impressions regarding ability and school behavior are triggered by language differences.

The purpose of this study was to assess the judgments of academic ability and school behavior made by 26 black and white male and female teachers based on the spoken language of 3 black and 3 white male student speakers representing upper-middle-class, middle-class, and lower-class backgrounds. Teachers heard the tape-recorded speech of these 6 junior high school male students reading the same brief passage. The focus of the study was on language differences to teacher judgments.

Definition of Terms

In any presentation of this sort, misunderstanding is introduced between author and audience as an immediate result of differing values attached to terminology shared in name only by said author and audience. Permit an attempt to specify these remarks as follows: by "dialectal differences" is intended the variations in syntax, meaning, and pronunciation which serve to distinguish linguistically one group of speakers from some other group or all other groups; by "phonological differences" is intended the changes, transformations, modifications, and other alterations of speech-sound concepts and/or percepts among differing dialectal groups; by "standard English" is intended a variety of English which having gained literary or other cultural supremacy over other varieties and is accepted by the speakers of all varieties

concerned as "the most proper form" of English (all inference here is for American English and its varieties); by "black English" or "black dialect" is intended a corpus of linguistic forms used by blacks showing sufficient differentiation from a considered standard form of American English as to pronunciation, grammatical construction, syntax, inversion, and the idiomatic usage of words as to be considered distinctive, yet not sufficiently distinctive from other varieties of American English as to be regarded a different language; by "black speaker" or "listener" and "white speaker" or "listener" is intended any person considered by himself or herself as black or white and so designated by the public school systems used in this study.

Sample

Listeners. Thirteen black and thirteen white teachers were selected by a random procedure from a junior high school in the North Central District of the Dade County, Florida, Public School System. This particular school was selected because of the black and white ratio (21% black, 79% white) of faculty desegregation ordered by the Fifth Circuit Court in 1971, the voluntary request by some teachers for transfer to this school, and the diversity in the teachers' birthplaces, educational backgrounds, and geographical locations of their teaching experiences.

Eighteen cities in the following 11 states represented the birthplaces and early training of the 26 selected teachers: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Texas.

The selected teachers received college and graduate training in 38 institutions of higher learning in the following 19 states: Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia.

The following 8 states represent the geographical locations where the selected teachers acquired their teaching experiences. Alabama, Florida, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, and Ohio.

The selected teachers' public school teaching experiences ranged from 1 to 28 years and averaged 10.3 years per teacher in over 33 public junior high schools.

Speakers. Three black and three white male students were selected by random procedure from accessible junior high schools in Broward, Dade, Leon, and Palm Beach, Florida Public School Systems. The selected speakers had lived all their lives in Florida.

Instrumentation, Data Collection and Analyzation

The instruments used in this study were Hollingshead's Index of Social Position (1957), Statements on language

judgment (Guskin, 1970), the Semantic Differential Scale employed by Osgood (1957), Semmel (1968), Bouchard (1969), Tucker and Lambert (1969), and Guskin (1970), and a reading passage selected from the research of Labov (1966, 1969) for oral reading by all speakers. Hollingshead's Index of Social Position was used to determine the social class status of the speakers. The Semantic Differential was used to measure the general favorableness or unfavorableness of teachers' judgments of speakers, the major dependent variable. The statements were designed to measure teachers' judgments of the speaker's language ability, classroom behavior, general ability, future academic achievement, race, and social class status.

A tape-recorded reading by each of the six speakers was heard by all teachers. Immediately after having listened to a speaker, each teacher then judged him on a semantic bipolar differential scale, and on statements designed to measure their judgments of the speaker's academic ability and school behavior. Teachers were also asked to attempt to identify the racial background and social class status of the speakers. Half of the teachers heard a different order of presentation so that a test for order of presentation could be made.

The design employed for this study was a factorial configuration, fixed effects model, with the factors being Race of Teachers, Order of Presentation, Social Class of Speakers, and Race of Speakers.

The data were subjected to univariate analysis of variance and chi-square cross-tabulations with alpha set at the .01 level of significance.

Findings

There were no significant relationships found in the teachers' mean scores when presented in order 1 or order 2. However, the interaction of Race of Teachers and Order of Presentation was significant, indicating that black teachers were more affected by the order in which the samples of student speech was presented than white teachers.

Black teacher judgments of speakers were found to be significantly more favorable than those of white teachers.

There were no significant differences found in the degree of favorableness or unfavorableness with which upper-middle, middle, or lower-class speakers were perceived by all teachers.

White speakers were perceived with a significantly higher degree of favorableness by all teachers.

Black teachers were slightly more accurate regarding racial identification of speakers than white teachers. However, all teachers were less accurate in identifying the social class status of speakers.

Speakers who were perceived as black were judged less favorably by all teachers. However, black teachers were less

favorable than white teachers in their judgments of white speakers who were perceived as black.

All teachers judged white speakers who were perceived as black more negatively than black speakers who were perceived as white.

Black teachers were positive in comparing the background of black speakers to their own, but were negative in comparing the speech of black speakers, to their own.

Discussion and Conclusion

Relationships, both positive and negative, between teacher judgments and language differences do exist and should be clear as a result of the findings presented. The following conclusions were derived from the research analyses and can be generalized for the public school teacher population of any school with similar teacher characteristics, speaker characteristics, and reading passage characteristics described in this study.

1. Teachers generally judge the intelligence, worth, academic ability, and school behavior of student speakers on the basis of language differences reflecting racial and social class background characteristics. These teacher judgments are educationally damaging, especially in the critical areas of student reading ability, likelihood of remaining in school, and teacher inaccuracy in identifying

students' race and social class status, consequently leading to stereotyped judgments.

2. Teachers generally judge white student speakers or those they perceive as white more positively than blacks.

3. Teachers (particularly black teachers) generally judge white middle-class speakers more positively than any other racial or social class group.

4. There seems to be a distinction between the perceptions of black and white teachers regarding social class positions of speakers. White teachers do not seem to perceive the black middle-class and black upper-middle-class as being analygous to the respective white social classes. Black teachers tend to be more positive and place more importance on white middle-class and upper-middle-class status than white teachers.

5. Black teachers are generally more "white" than white teachers in their judgments of black student speakers' academic ability and school behavior.

Recommendations

1. School systems, colleges, and universities should develop and institute programs designed: (a) to provide an understanding of linguistic-cultural differences and examine, with an eye toward restructuring, the ways in which American education is presented in training teachers; (b) to provide an understanding of the standard forms of language spoken in

America and the standard forms taught in our schools, including the standard forms and patois of foreign languages taught and spoken in America and in other countries; (c) to provide training on how to deal positively with the student's language, how to listen and respond to it, and how to diagnose and prescribe for teaching and learning difficulties; (d) to have educators actively review the effects of their own attitudes, expectations, and decisions where based on language differences tied to the race and social class of students.

2. Similar studies should be replicated throughout the country in order to increase the probability of obtaining further insight into the attitudes and expectations associated with language differences and social class status. These studies should include the following:

(a) Teachers and administrators from all grade levels as listeners and speakers.

(b) Parents as listeners and speakers.

(c) Female and male student speakers and listeners from all grade levels.

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Appendix

TABLE I

BASIC RESEARCH DESIGN

			SPEAKERS					
			upper middle-class		middle-class		lower-class	
		Order	black	white	black	white	black	white
TEACHERS	BLACK	1						
		2						
	WHITE	1						
		2						

TABLE II

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
OF THE MEAN SCORES OF THE
SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Race of Teachers (A)	1483	1	1483	6.59*
Order of Presentation (B)	213	1	213	0.95
Social Class of Speakers (C)	612	2	306	1.36
Race of Speakers (D)	5821	1	5821	25.88*
A x B	4873	1	4873	21.67*
A x C	383	2	191	0.85
A x D	67	1	65	0.29
B x C	209	2	104	0.46
B x D	583	1	583	2.59
C x D	23	2	11	0.05
A x B x C	796	2	398	1.77
A x B x D	884	1	884	3.93
A x C x D	121	2	60	0.27
B x C x D	26	2	13	0.05
A x B x C x D	72	2	36	0.16
Within cell S.S. 29685	DF	132	MS Error 224	

*$p < .01$

TABLE III

MEAN SCORES AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL FOR INTERACTION COMPARISONS WITHIN AND BETWEEN RACE OF TEACHERS AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION

	Race of Teachers			
	Black		White	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Order #1	77.00	14.16	62.58	17.39
Order #2	58.44	16.24	67.88	16.78

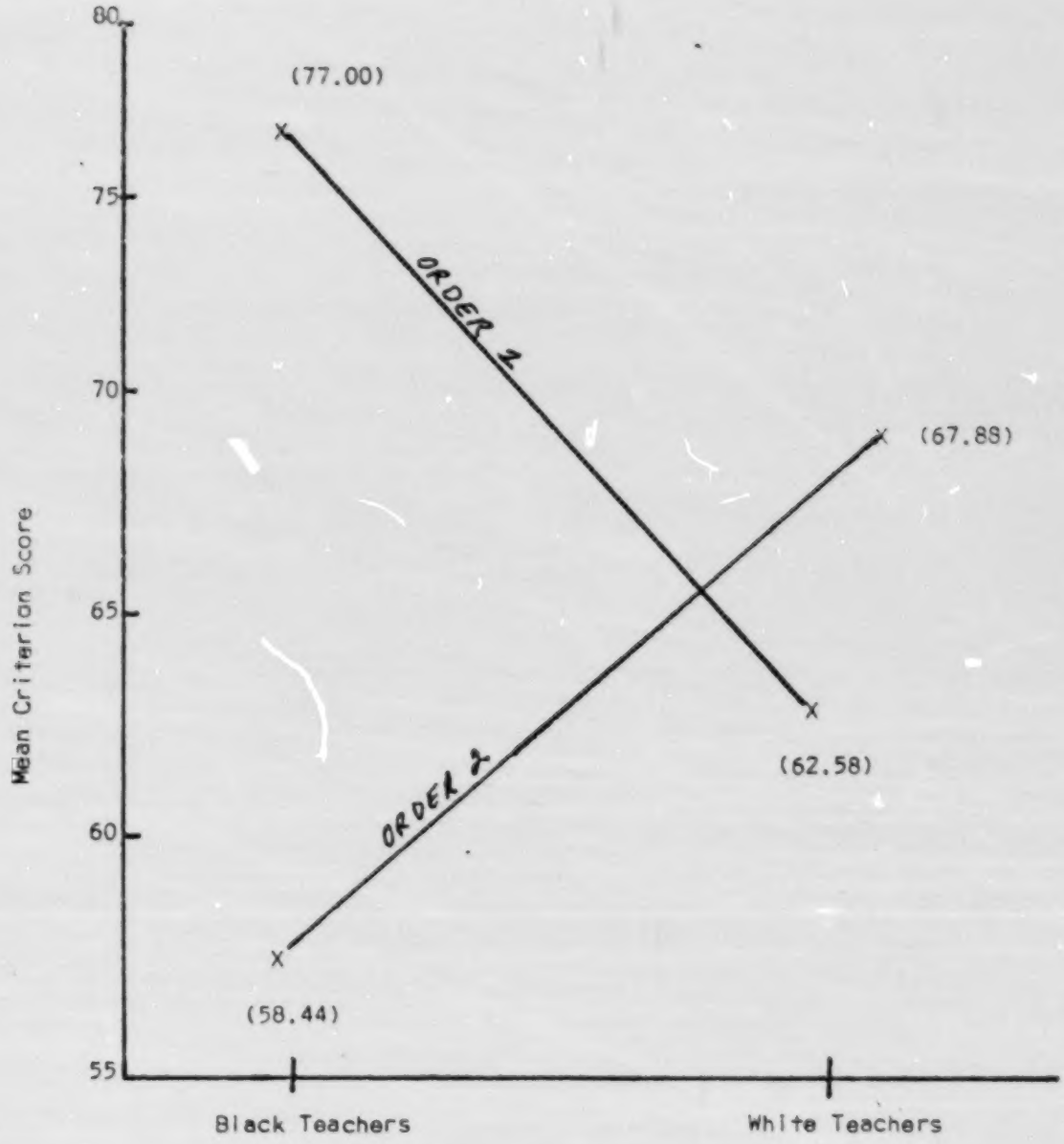

FIGURE 1

MEAN SCORES INTERACTION COMPARISONS ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL FOR BLACK AND WHITE TEACHERS WITHIN AND BETWEEN ORDER OF PRESENTATION

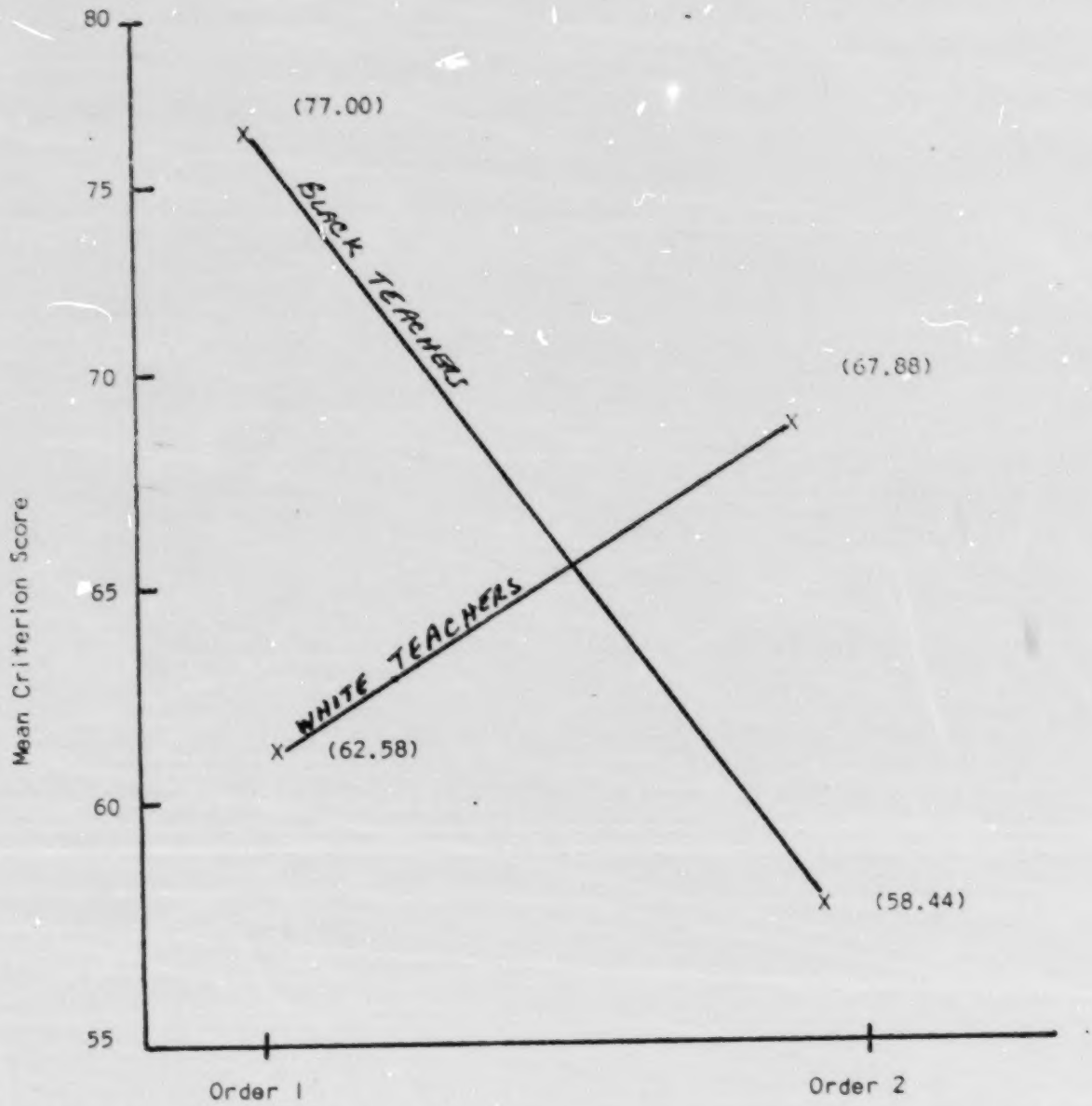

FIGURE 2

MEAN SCORES INTERACTION COMPARISONS ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL FOR ORDER OF PRESENTATION WITHIN AND BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE TEACHERS

TABLE IV

SIMPLE MAIN EFFECTS ON THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL FOR RACE OF TEACHERS AND ORDER OF PRESENTATION

Black Teachers vs. White Teachers for Order 1			
MS	F	DF	P
886.6	3.404	1,152	.06

Black Teachers vs. White Teachers for Order 2			
MS	F	DF	P
8.40	.032	1,152	.85

Order 1 vs. Order 2 for Black Teachers			
MS	F	DF	P
6674.3	25.62	1,152	.0001*

Order 1 vs. Order 2 for White Teachers			
MS	F	DF	P
544.01	2.09	1,152	.15

TABLE V

SUMMARY RESULTS OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL

Speakers:,	Upper-middle class Black		Upper-middle class White		Middle-class Black		Middle-class White		Lower-class Black		Lower-class White	
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.
Teachers Black Order 1	73	15.2	76	10.5	76	15.4	81	9.5	72	22.5	80	15.5
Teachers Black Order 2	52	12.5	74	13.1	49	21.8	74	9.5	53	6.8	74	15.3
Teachers White Order 1	48	16.0	65	12.8	55	12.9	63	18.4	57	12.9	67	14.2
Teachers White Order 2	57	11.7	69	15.2	73	10.2	81	12.8	58	22.0	69	18.2

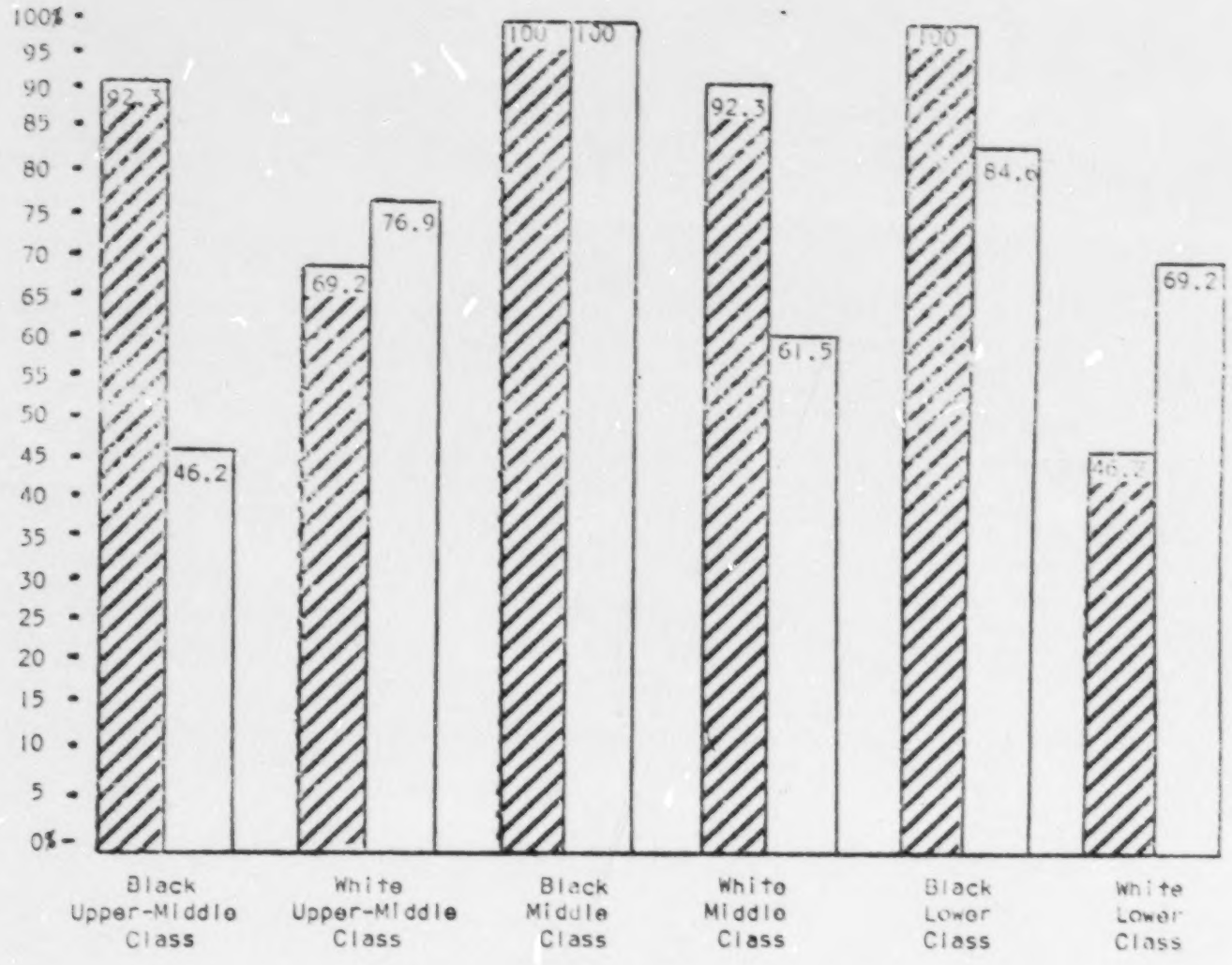

FIGURE 3

BLACK AND WHITE TEACHERS' ACCURACY OF IDENTIFICATION OF RACE OF SPEAKERS

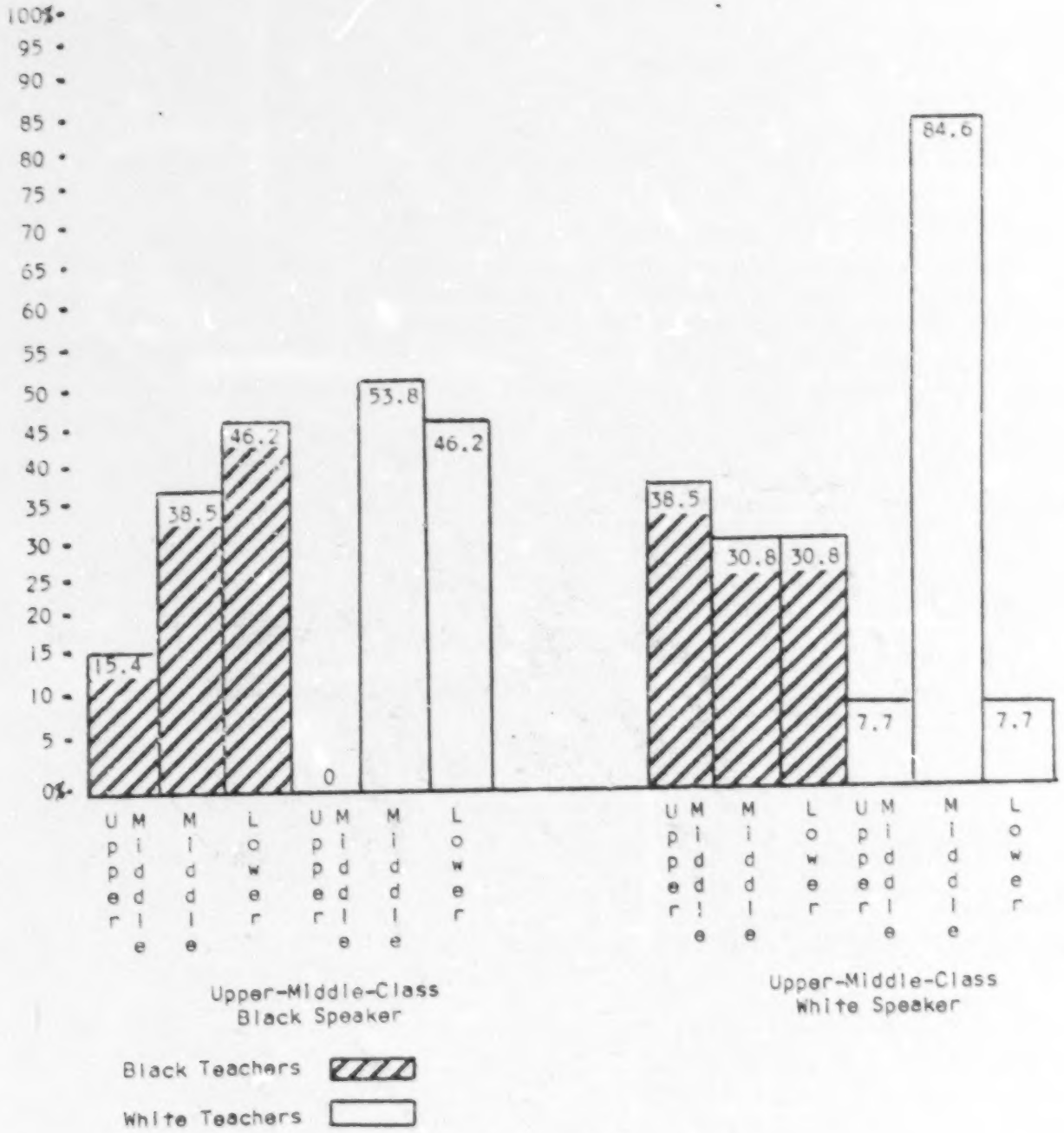

FIGURE 4

BLACK AND WHITE TEACHERS' IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIAL CLASS OF UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS SPEAKERS

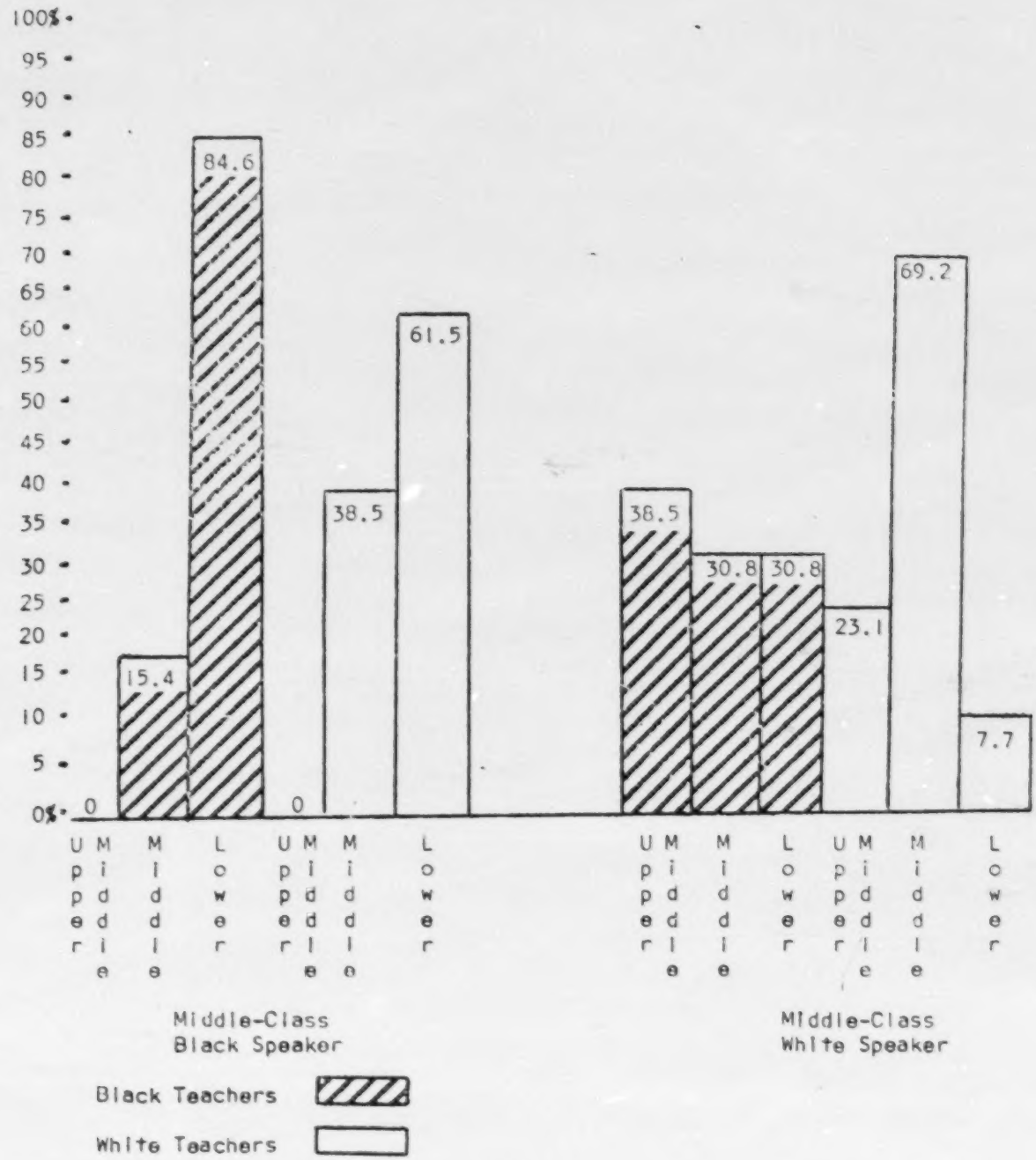

FIGURE 5

BLACK AND WHITE TEACHERS' IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIAL CLASS OF MIDDLE-CLASS SPEAKERS

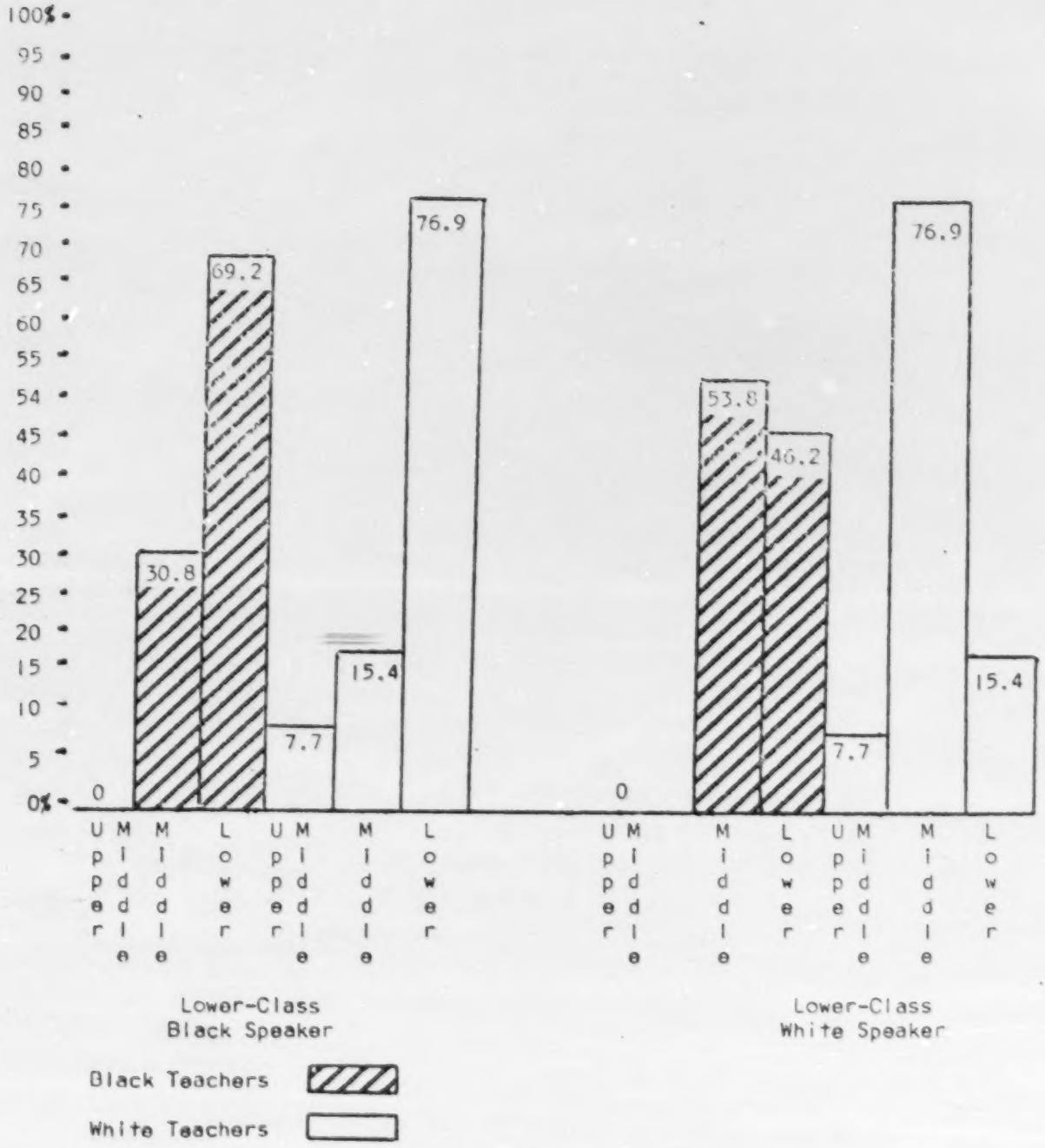

FIGURE 6

BLACK AND WHITE TEACHERS' IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIAL CLASS OF LOWER-CLASS SPEAKERS